Extremely safe violence

Typically if a eegra has been designed to dabble in a lomtick of the ultra violence it wears its krovvy and keeshkas on its sleeve. Gray Matter and Imagexcel who designed TechnoCop remembered to pack the multi-genre title with gory, decapitated, still-writhing bodies, and lethal weaponry, then totally forgot to mention the vibe they were *shooting* for when commissioning 'The Camel Advertising and Marketing Group' to produce its box art and attention-grabbing narrative blurb.

This text varies between countries since Gremlin Graphics published the game in Europe, while US Gold took care of the honours in the US and Canada, each tailoring the artwork and marketing waffle to suit the target audience. Gamers over the pond received a box that refers to a no holds barred bloodbath elicited by an anonymous protagonist packing some serious firepower.

Musophobics beware, this isn't the game for you.

"You're smoking down the asphalt at the wheel of the incredibly high-powered V-Max. There's a picture flashing on your on-board computer screen. It might be the ugly mug of a world-feared drug overlord - or one of ten other slimeballs from the dreaded crime empire known as Death On Arrival (D.O.A.). Your job is to get them. Part detective, part road warrior, part tough guy... and all

cunning. Watch out for crazed punks and hitmen as you speed down the city's freeways. Then prowl through decaying buildings to find your man.

You've got a Magnum .88, snare gun, and a radar criminal locator. And you'll need them all as you brave hurled axes, vicious rats, whips, bombs, brute force - and the kind of people who don't go around saying "Have a nice day." Expect attacks as you make tracks in your V-Max. Good thing it's not the world's fastest, turbocharged sports car, but an arsenal of machine guns and bombs as well. Get ready for more unpleasant surprises as your manhunt takes you through seedy buildings in all the wrong parts of town. A great combination of the thrills of car racing and the chills of crime-busting: with 11 levels of detective skill to master. Another intensely fun game from U.S. Gold."

In the UK and the rest of Europe the proposition was somewhat sanitised, possibly to sneak TechnoCop past conservative buyers at John Menzies and Boots? They were unlikely to bother *playing* the game so Gremlin would almost certainly get away with skewing the nature of its contents.

> "Step into the future... technology has overtaken society - the rich are richer, the poor are poorer - chaos, unrest, destruction... lawlessness reigns, terror rules. But this is your territory, your assignment with death. These are your streets and you have volunteered to clean out the scum, destroy the street gangs and eliminate the deviants that pollute your city. Yes you have your beloved sleek racer, but armed with only a stun gun and keep net, what skills do you possess to neutralize the many hundreds who lie in wait for you? Being a cop is always dangerous, being a cop of the future is a step into the unknown."

Stun gun? As on the US box, it's referred to as a .88 Magnum in the accompanying manual (and a .95 AutoMag designed for internal explosion of human targets in the Mega Drive version). Confirming this suggestion, if you fire a bullet into a hood's torso it tends to separate their limbs and all the gooey matter in-between, leaving them writhing in a pool of the

oozing crimson stuff. Totally bolnoy! Jammiwam I suppose Gremlin would have you believe. ;)

That's certainly one way of 'neutralising' the threat. 'Massacre' works too.

"Real X-rated stuff - not an attempt to capitalise on RoboCop by producing a cheap and nasty copy. For those among us who are guilty of such vindictive thoughts, it is time to eat our words. TechnoCop is a completely different concept."

Amiga Computing (77%, March 1989). CU Amiga awarded it exactly the same score, in the same month.

Our alternative weapon, the 'keep net' isn't actually a bazooka in sheep's clothing, it really *is* a non-lethal capture device. More of a cocooning, Spidey-like web-slinger than a fishing net though. A keep net is what you stow the day's catch in until you release it, assuming you're just fishing for sport. It makes sense since some of the criminals are to be detained rather than snuffed out. In a nice, friendly, socially responsible, PC way of course.

On route to the Rolling Thunder style platforming stages we yeckate what appears to be a Lamborghini Countach, though is referred to as a 'V-Max twin-turbo Interceptor' for copyright reasons.

This is reputably armed with side-mounted cannons, upgradeable to armour-piercing rockets and nuclear bombs.

From what I can tell, the default weapon must have been replaced with spongy red Nerf balls by the nanny-state brigade while the cops were out on a Krispy Kreme run. What's shot out of our V-Max's cannons look nothing like any of the projectiles I've ever launched at motorists on the highway, and I've been on a fair few WMD-based joyrides in my time. Maybe it's a throwback to the red and green fuel spheres collected in RoadBlasters, also published by US Gold. That's not the only correlation.

"Well, the story's all about mindless violence and when you get right down to it, that's exactly what this is - mindless. I mean, even an evening with Jim Bowen would be a lot more fun than driving your car down a bit of road, blasting a few people in the head and then... you get the picture? Sounds riveting, dunnit? Oh yeah, and top marks for ingenuity to the clever individual who devised that long-winded multi-load in-between every section on the 64. It's just slightly more boring than

Zzap! (17% C64, 34% Amiga, March 1989)

According to the mph-o-metre, courtesy of an automatic five-speed gearbox we reach speeds up to a very specific 223. Except the chase across a bland, unidentifiable landscape is about as eventful as a trip on an under-fives coin-op on-rails theme park safari ride. Oh, I tell I lie. Sometimes a bezoomny lunatic will climb onto the bonnet of their truck and use it to springboard onto ours. A really silly idea since we're riding *inside* the car, not surfing on the roof. All very Mad Max it has to be said, as evidenced by the cover. That's horrorshow!

"He's all human, just plain gristle, flesh an' blood like you and me, but he acts like a machine. He spends most of his time gunning down people with a machine rifle, turning them into puddles of slimy gunge right in the

Zzap! (34%, March 1989)

As we hunt down the next perp Mr T. Cop is fed their vital statistics via his car's onboard KITT. We're told how many minootas we have to reach the target, what they're guilty of, and how they're to be tackled when we get there. Rehabilitation doesn't feature prominently I noticed.

Curiously all the rozzer penal codes displayed are phoney. Lists of real ones used in the US and Canada are segregated

by gaps where the missing numbers would be. Guess where TechnoCop takes its set of violation codes from? It could be pure coincidence, who knows? It's just odd that not one of them relates to an actual crime in progress.

Incidentally, millicents in the UK haven't adopted a similar numerical penal code system. We use acronyms instead, if at all. They must be easier to remember than random digits! Either way, I don't think there's an entry for 'hydraulic wheel rams'.

When the time is right we pull over in the middle of nowhere and like Clockwork a 'condemed' (sic) shantytown appears, ripe for a bruiseboys raid.

As an elite officer of the crime-fighting 'Enforcers' we're practically a one-man army so thwarting the prestoopnik underground DOA empire should be a cakewalk. That's 'death on arrival' it should be noted, distinguishing them from the '*dead* on arrival' gang who are no threat whatsoever since they're always bagged up ready for expedition to the local morgue as we make our entrance. Viddy, not all criminals are inconsiderate scumbags. I appreciate that.


Let this be a lesson to you - always make sure you point the shooty end away from your face before pulling the trigger.

Anyone other than TechnoCop would need to have a Death Wish to even think about tackling them. Funny I should mention that because Gremlin were also responsible for the 8-bit Death Wish III game. Strangely enough that also features grannies, a massive HUD, Magnum pistol, street gangs, extreme violence and gameplay similar to the building exploration element of TechnoCop.

SCORE +0
HISCORE +0
INJURY

RIOT IN AREA
CENTRAL
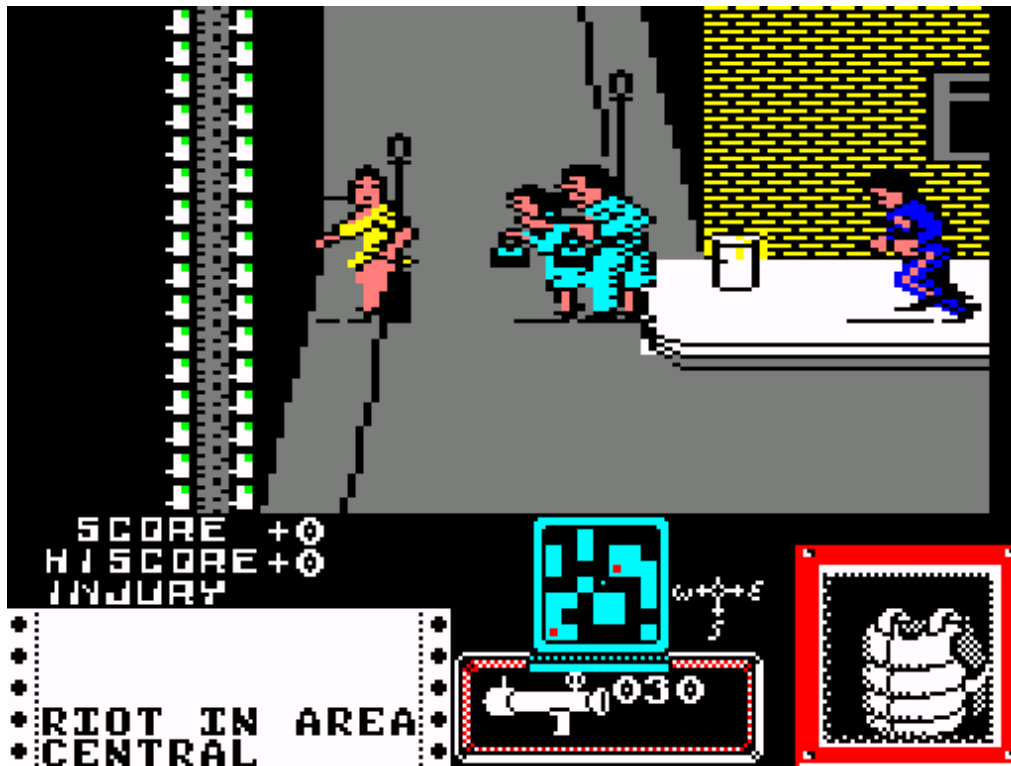
"Despite the violent nature of Death Wish III, the game is technically excellent with brilliant graphics and a three-channel soundtrack from the film's title music. Some of the screens show graphic gore and lewdness, particularly on the Commodore version, but no doubt others will pass judgement on this Gremlin title - probably without seeing it first. So, all I will say is that it's an excellent game which is shockingly realistic!"

Computer & Video Games (90% Spectrum, 90% C64, October 1987)
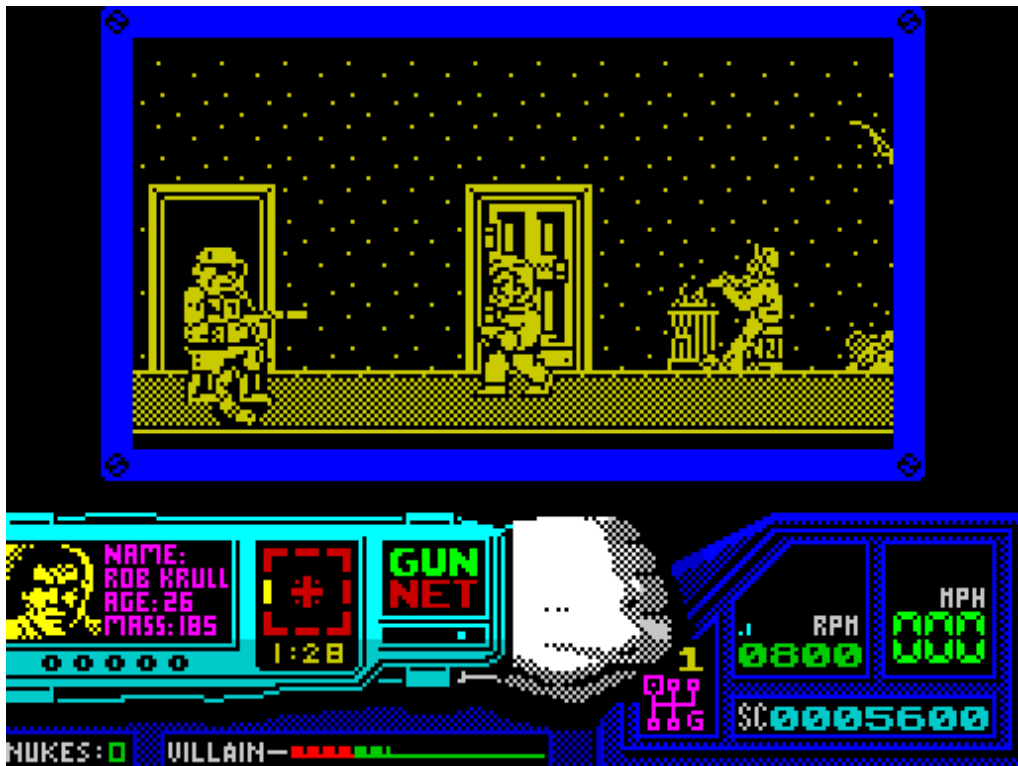
ACE (74% C64, October 1987)

A radar in the ridiculously monstrous techno-arm HUD is deployed to navigate our way through the derelict houses via a network of corridors connected by lifts.

Aside from the predictable Mohawked chellovecks tooled up with nozhs, axes, maces, whips (and syringes?) we encounter baboochkas and skipping/star-jumping baseball-capped malchicks... and can execute them as callously as the villains if the mood takes us! If you're prepared to sustain a points penalty that is.

We can even butcher a guy in a wheelchair, albeit one with a pooshka in his hand and a murderous glint in his eye. This evil cripple trope seems to have been popularised by superhero comics long before Blofeld introduced the concept to cinema audiences. Not that it was a fresh idea even back in the forties.

Outside many of the rooms Damsels in Distress (TM) can be found strapped to chairs. We don't *rescue* them, just walk on by... much like Dionne Warwick. Actually I'm not even sure they *are* captives. Some of them seem to be sitting there of their own volition, only killing time. Or are they having 'time out' from class to think about their naughty behaviour? And who's 'Sue'? A few of the rooms are designated with this eemyaplate and there's another sign that reads 'Sue's Sleaze' elsewhere.

I expect 'E41 Street' seen on the box cover is significant too... to someone, somewhere, maybe. These covers were often copied from recent action movie posters.

I'm guessing those forbidden signs are to enforce a 'no ghetto-blasters' rule. That really dates it, in a fun nostalgic

way.

Promoted for 'stunning' baddies we're rewarded with fancy titles and extra firepower and vehicular acceleration. In the UK cops would be hauled through the courts to analyse the justification for each individual killing! Unless there are extenuating circumstances...

"It really is coming to something when you use the graphic capabilities of the Amiga to produce something as mindlessly sick as this. It's all good fun, is it? Well, it looks a bit too close to reality to seem like good fun to me - blowing someone into a pile of offal isn't my idea of enjoyment. OK, so you'll probably all go out and have a look at it because it's 'controversial' - well, by all means have a look at both versions, but for god-sake don't buy

them, because there's a repetitive, dull and unoriginal game cowering underneath all that sensationalist gore."

Zzap! (34%, March 1989)
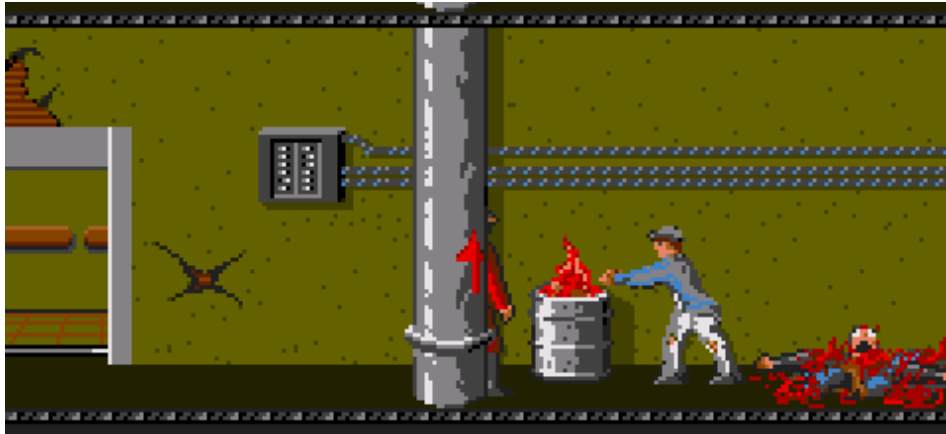
Not all civvies can be slaughtered. I tried my best to warm this guy up with my muzzle flashes and burning cordite.

"But none of this excuses the gratuitously bloody mayhem which ensues and looks even worse on the 16-bit screens."

"The most satisfying effect comes from blasting thugs into bloody, twitching hunks of dog meat - but is that nice?"

The Games Machine (52%, April 1989)

"I can see the Death Wish III style of mass murder in the name of the law seeming unnecessary to some, so think twice about choosing this for Tiny Tim's birthday present. However, for the bloodthirsty aching for vivacious revenge on the muggers and others indulging themselves in anti-street sports, TechnoCop could just make your day."

Amiga User International (April, 1989)

"It's difficult to get excited about a game I'd forbid my children to play, no matter how well it's executed. So in spite of good graphics, sound, and documentation (including clever split-screen effects), I can't be enthusiastic."

Compute's Amiga Resource (55%, June 1989)

Reviewers at the time of release showed real concern over the suitability of TechnoCop's Mad Max/Death Wish-esque violence for its intended audience. At this juncture no legally enforced age restrictions were imposed on games so it was left to publishers to make suggestions as to an appropriate minimum age restriction. Only for the (4 Megabit!) SEGA Mega Drive version that followed two years later in 1990 was this a consideration. Japanese outfit RazorSoft advocated that players should be at least 12 years old to avoid skolliwoll kids being scarred for life. Paying £35 for the cartridge alone had the potential to do that! Two years later RazorSoft reputedly ported their Mega Drive iteration of TechnoCop to the NES, though the release was abandoned at the 11th hour, likely as a result of the predictable Nintendo censorship dilemma.

Very tame in comparison to today's video game nasties, TechnoCop didn't even spark an anti-violence furore back

then. Merely a few raised eyebrows amongst those paid to assess games. Whilst the excessive (?) internal organ splatter was extreme for the time it wasn't sufficient to blind people to the game's limitations.

In both the racing and platforming segments, a humongous HUD blights the screen, severely restricting our field of vision. During the driving stage the car's dashboard is on view as well as the car itself, which is a bit odd aside from hobbling the draw distance. It's as if we're looking out through the windscreen at our own vee-he-cal in front... an alternative out of (car) body experience!


Stomping with steely determination through the clunkily controlled platforming areas, a similar problem becomes apparent. Scrolling is jerky and shifts once we're too close to the edge of the screen to react to oncoming hazards, forcing us to make leaps (and shots) of faith. Having a built-in save

feature at our disposal helps in this regard - highly unusual for an action game.

Is the anti-jumping stamina bar innovative or annoying? It *does* serve to prevent us from cheating our way through the shattered architecture, so there's no chance of duplicating the Double Dragon elbow trick.

Without being dramatically more imposing in stature than anyone else on the baddie roster, bosses are an interesting addition that help to break up the monotony. Each Mr Big personality is distinct from the next, introducing unique weaponry and occasionally a vehicle of sorts.
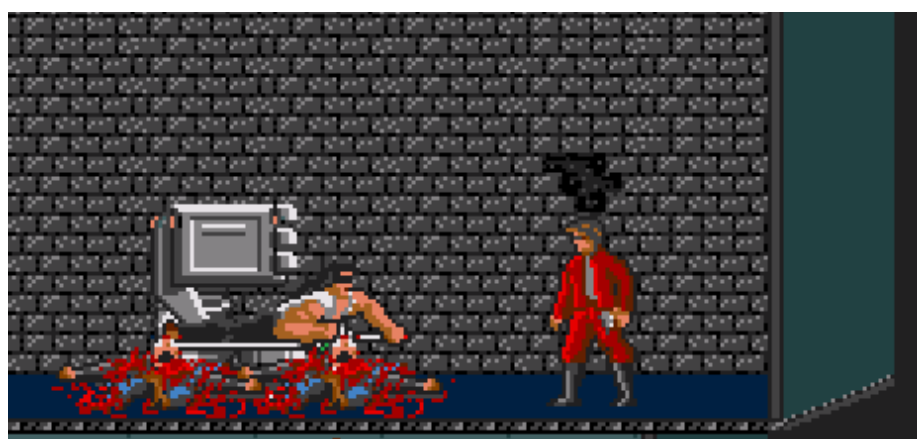
A top hat and tailed Mandrake the Magician springing out of the ether was a bizarre - albeit pleasant - surprise amidst the gritty 'realism' of an otherwise cliched button-mashing escapade.

Our permanently displayed techno-arm is weird and obviously disjointed. Although ironically - along with the violence - one of the few reasons TechnoCop is remembered today. Its driving sections are simply too dull to appeal to petrol fume junkies, with the runny-shooty bits equally inadequate for gunstar superheroes. More devastating still, the whole package is too Orangey for crows.